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UMM recognized as All-Steinway School

Summary: Steinway and Sons, renowned maker of pianos, has recognized UMM as an All-Steinway School. The honor demonstrates UMM's "commitment to excellence," providing quality instruments for faculty and students on which to perform and to learn.

(June 28, 2006)-Steinway and Sons, renowned maker of pianos since 1853, has recognized the University of Minnesota, Morris (UMM) as an All-Steinway School. The honor demonstrates UMM's "commitment to excellence," providing quality instruments for both faculty and students on which to perform and to learn. All of UMM's pianos, from practice room to recital hall, are Steinway and Son instruments.

"This recognition illustrates that UMM is serious about its music program and willing to have the best instruments for our students," states Kay Carlson, piano teaching specialist at UMM. "An amazing aspect of this new recognition is that UMM has been an All-Steinway school for a long time, since 1971 when the Humanities Fine Arts building was completed."

The All-Steinway School recognition program was started long after UMM purchased its Steinway pianos. About two years ago, Carlson and Clyde Johnson, professor emeritus of music, began working with Steinway and Sons to receive the All-Steinway School designation. The faculty arranged for representatives of the company to inspect and qualify each of UMM's pianos for the program. The beautiful pianos chosen and purchased in the late 1960s by Johnson passed the inspection with flying colors. Purchased at about \$8,000, UMM's pianos are now valued at more than \$70,000 each. "They were a very good investment for the campus," states Carlson.

Steinway pianos are unique in that every element of each piano has been created by hand by a master craftsman. Handcrafting each instrument, one at a time, takes up to one year. The result is a finely fashioned piano with its own unique qualities, both in sound and beauty.

Even after all these years, Johnson still remembers with a sense of awe his experience purchasing UMM's pianos. "I traveled to New York to the Steinway and Sons factory showroom. That morning, they left me completely alone in a room full of 7-foot grands. I tried them all. Eventually, I got kind of 'tuned-in' to the qualities of each of the pianos. I picked out one somewhat 'dark' in quality, one 'bright' in quality, and several in between. Then, John Steinway himself took me out to lunch. When I returned, the showroom was filled with 9-foot grands, and I started the process all over again."

Because the Humanities Fine Arts building was not complete at the time, Steinway and Sons arranged for the pianos to be stored at no charge to UMM until the building was finished in 1971. Working with Steinway and Sons was as "slick as a whistle," recalls Johnson.

The decisions made by Johnson and others more than 35 years ago have had a major impact on the many music students who have studied at UMM. Terri Jo Schuft '07, Stewart, the recipient of the Betty Peterson Memorial Accompanying

Award and an ambassador for the Office of Admissions, shares: “Having the Steinway pianos is really a huge asset to our music program. While giving tours, I love bringing potential students down to the practice rooms and telling them how many Steinways we have available for the students to use. Some schools only have one ‘really good’ piano that you can use when practicing for big recitals. We not only have our full size grand in Recital Hall, but most professors have a baby Steinway in their offices. We also have six other baby grands in practice rooms, along with others in each rehearsal room. I’ve been spoiled being able to play on Steinways for the past four years, and now I can’t imagine playing on anything else!”

As an All-Steinway School, UMM has made a commitment to keeping its instruments in perfect playing order. “Part of the agreement in becoming an All-Steinway School is to have a cycle of piano tuning and maintenance,” according to Ken Hodgson, associate professor of music and discipline coordinator. “We have the pianos tuned three to four times each year and have now begun the process of having the action of each Steinway rebuilt—one at a time.” The 9-foot Steinway grand from the Recital Hall made the trip to Minneapolis this summer, where it will undergo a complete rebuild by the experts at Schmitt Music.

Only forty colleges and universities in the United States have been designated All-Steinway Schools, including four in Minnesota: the University of Minnesota, Morris, the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, Bemidji State University, and Concordia College, St. Paul.

Through personal and academic discovery, the University of Minnesota, Morris provides opportunities for students to grow intellectually, engage in community, experience environmental stewardship and celebrate diversity. A renewable and sustainable educational experience, Morris prepares graduates for careers, for advanced degrees, for lifelong learning, for work world flexibility in the future, and for global citizenship. Learn more about Morris at morris.umn.edu or call 888-866-3382.